



Executive Summary

March 27, 2006

What is 211?

2-1-1 is the national abbreviated dialing code for free access to health and human services Information and Referral. 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember and universally recognizable number that makes a critical connection between individuals and families seeking services or volunteer opportunities and the appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies. 2-1-1 makes it possible for people to navigate the complex and ever-growing maze of human service agencies and programs. By making services easier to access, 2-1-1 encourages prevention and fosters self-sufficiency. It also is hoped that it will reduce the number of non-emergency calls inappropriately made to 911.

Why Do We Need 211 In Massachusetts ?

Often people can not easily access the information or service they need because they do not know whom to call. There is no simple way to remember the name or number of the local service access point. The creation of 2-1-1 will change that.

Within the Commonwealth there are literally thousands of phone numbers for health and social service programs, government offices, community organizations, volunteer referral centers, donation clearinghouses, educational systems and neighborhood groups. There are over 100 comprehensive and specialized Information and Referrals (I&Rs) in the Commonwealth, each with its own name and 10 digit phone number.

What Will The Mass211 System Look Like ?

The 2-1-1 system will be managed by Mass211, Inc, a nonprofit organization created solely for this purpose.

2-1-1 in Massachusetts will build on nearly three decades of I&R experience led by United Way funded and/or operated Information and Referral programs, while at the same time streamlining and improving the management of service delivery. 2-1-1 services will be provided effectively and efficiently across the state. Mass211 has chosen a single, central call center model which will be operated by a vendor organization (**Medical Foundation of Boston**) selected through a competitive bidding process. Mass211 has also contracted with the **United Way of Tri-County** headquartered in Framingham, to provide daily management, financial oversight, accountability and marketing. There will be a Backup Call Center available in case of an emergency. The evolution from a 9 hub call center model to a single, central call center model was arrived at after lengthy review of overhead costs, database capabilities and new more robust technologies. We feel strongly that the single central call center model will provide a seamless, accurate source for information and referral services.

Mass211 has an existing relationship with EOHHS for the development and use of the “Resource Locator”, a statewide database currently used by six comprehensive (2-1-1 partner) I&R programs. The following agencies have been working partners on 2-1-1 development and involved with data collection for the 2-1-1/EOHHS statewide database: Community United Way of Pioneer Valley, United Way of Central Massachusetts, Brockton Area Multi Services, United Way of Greater Attleboro-Taunton, Barnstable County Dept. of Human Services, United Way of Merrimack Valley and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay. Northern Berkshire Community Coalition and Hampshire Community Action Commission contributed during the early database development phase.

Phase One Startup

Mass211 will provide Phase One Startup service beginning in July of 2006. Service will be available to all Massachusetts residents weekdays for 12 hours a day. Initially, Call Center phone technology will be basic and marketing will be done primarily through the vast resources of the United Way system in Massachusetts.

How Will Mass211 Be Funded ?

United Way Commitment: Fifteen Massachusetts United Ways have committed \$489,000 annually in support of statewide 2-1-1 service. (Commitment Letters Enclosed) Cash flow will be maintained by using a \$125,000 line of credit secured through Banknorth.

State Funding: State support while not required for the start-up phase will be sought once the program is operational to help cover the anticipated added costs associated with increased call volume.

Federal Funding: Bipartisan Federal legislation, *The Calling for 2-1-1 Act of 2003*, has been filed and is in committee. This would authorize \$200 million annually to assist states with implementing and sustaining statewide 2-1-1. If successful, a 50% match will be required for each dollar of federal funding. Mass211 would enhance and expand its offerings if Federal funding was appropriated as per the 2-1-1 Act.

Elements of the legislation include:

- Authorization of \$200 million annually to assist states with implementing and sustaining 2-1-1 statewide. States would provide a 50% match to the grant, which could come from current 2-1-1 funding in the community, such as United Way funding, funding through other non-profits, state government funding, foundation grants or corporate funding.
- Funding would be administered by the Department of Commerce and the bill would go through the Commerce committees in both houses.
- Federal funding for 2-1-1 will not come from earmarks to existing federal HHS programs such as the Social Services Block Grant, TANF and the Child Care and Development Block Grant.
- States would designate a “lead entity” to plan for statewide coverage of 2-1-1 and administer grants to call centers. This entity usually will be a coalition that includes Information and Referral providers, as well as other organizations representative of the various sectors of the community, both for- and non-profit. In many cases, but not all, United Ways are a part of these coalitions. (*In Massachusetts, this role would be played by Mass211, Inc.*)
- The federal funding may be used for a broad range of 2-1-1 services including planning for, implementing, operating and maintaining 2-1-1; public awareness campaigns; staff training; technology and other capacity issues.
- Grant recipients must abide by National Standards of 2-1-1 Centers as specified by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS).

Other Sources: A robust 2-1-1 system will require a diverse funding base including grants from corporations and foundations. We are also exploring funding options related to terrorism, bio-terrorism, natural disaster preparedness and pandemic preparedness.

Phase One Budget

Revenue Projections

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| United Ways | \$ | 489,000 |
| Projected Grant Income*** | \$ | 35,000 |
| Other Income**** | \$ | 6,000.00 |
| Total Projected Revenue | \$ | 530,000 |

Expenses

| | | |
|--|-----------|----------------|
| Mass211 Central Functions | \$ | 70,000 |
| Provided By the United Way of Tri-County (includes, daily management, financial oversight and management, marketing, grant writing and general office services. | | |
| Verizon One Time set-up (estimate) * | \$ | 25,000 |
| Database updating | \$ | 9,200 |
| Call Center Functions | \$ | 423,718 |
| Provided by the Medical Foundation ** | | |
| Total First Year Expenses | \$ | 527,918 |

*

A firm proposal with exact costs for the one time set-up is forthcoming from Verizon. We have been informed that there will be a \$1500 set up fee and \$500 per switch cost to program and point 211 to a dedicated 800 number at the Medical Foundation call center. We have no reason to believe at this time that the total cost will exceed the \$25,000 amount we have budgeted for.

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Call Center expenses are based on the actual accepted program proposal submitted by the Medical Foundation.

Mass211 is aware of and in fact has received a number of supportive grants over the last 5 years that we will be applying for once the system is operational. We are confident that we will be able to meet and hopefully exceed our projection in this category.

Other projected income is comprised of annual support from MAIRS and other streams of ancillary funding.

Please contact me directly if you have further questions or concerns.

Thanks again for your expedient review of our program. The Board of Directors and I are grateful for your consideration in this matter.

Respectfully,

Paul L. Mina
Ex. Director Mass211